

Capitol Region Council of Governments

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AGENDA ITEM #2

TO: CRCOG REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
FROM: MARY ELLEN KOWALEWSKI
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SUBJECT: REPORT ON REGIONAL PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE
DATE: OCTOBER 6, 2009

The Capitol Region Council of Governments Regional Planning Commission has prepared a draft update of *Achieving the Balance: A Plan of Conservation and Development for the Capitol Region*. This plan is a general guide for the future conservation and development of the greater Hartford area. Its individual chapters provide an overview of the many factors that influence our regional development pattern, and the choices available to us as we move into the future.

As required by State Statutes, CRCOG conducted a 65-day public comment period on the Draft Plan, which closed on Monday September 14th. The CRCOG Regional Planning Commission will meet on October 15th to review comments received, and recommend final changes to this draft document. We will seek Policy Board adoption of the Regional Plan Update at the October 21, 2009 Policy Board Meeting.

The draft plan and a background memo on the plan update process are available on the CRCOG Website at:

http://www.crcog.org/Meetings_minutes/mm_regional_planning.html

Summary of Comments

Throughout the update process, CRCOG staff had numerous communications with municipal planners and Regional Planning Commission members regarding this draft document. We thank all of our municipal officials for their help in bringing the plan to its current form. During the public comment process, some additional comments were received from municipal officials and others. We have posted a matrix which summarizes comments received, and how we have addressed/or plan to address them, on the CRCOG website. In addition, revised narrative and maps are being posted as they are completed.

Comments were received from the following individuals and agencies:

1. Marina Rodriguez, CED Coordinator and Assistant Town Planner, Vernon and Chip Bellows, Vernon Planning and Zoning Commission member
2. Jennifer Cassidy, Executive Assistant to Councilman James Boucher, Hartford
3. Hiram Peck, Town Planner, and John Loomis, Planning Commission Chairman, Simsbury
4. Neil Pade, Director, Planning and Community Development, Canton

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5. Steven Kushner, Director of Planning and Community Development, Avon
6. Peter Hughes, Planning and Development Director, Marlborough
7. Tyler Kleykamp, Lead Planning Analyst, Intergovernmental Policy Division, State Office of Policy and Management
8. Peter Gillespie, Town Planner on behalf of Wethersfield Planning and Zoning Commission
9. Michael Seder, West Hartford Planning and Zoning Commissioner and RPC Representative from West Hartford
10. John Shemo and Rebecca Nolan, MetroHartford Alliance

The OPM comment found the Draft Regional Plan to be not inconsistent with the Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut 2005-2010. OPM also commended CRCOG for developing this comprehensive plan for the region.

Most of the requested revisions were technical in nature, such as removing recently developed areas from open space mapping, adding or changing municipal focus areas, or updating data included in tables. There were also some suggestions for changes to wording within the text, including the goals and policy recommendations, to improve the clarity of statements, and expand upon concepts included within the plan. For the most part, staff determined that these changes were consistent with the policy direction of the plan, and proposed to incorporate the requested changes.

In addition, several people who commented asked specific questions regarding statements made in the plan narrative, or how to interpret maps and data. We will respond to these questions directly.

Several comments that are more substantive relate to what open space designations mean within the context of the plan, and how the regional plan may be used by state agencies in funding decisions regarding the expansion of public water and sewer service. It should be noted that it is the Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut that is the governing document in terms of guiding state investment decisions of \$200,000 or more. The State Plan of C & D is due to be updated next year. CRCOG will be working closely with our member municipalities and the State OPM in that update process, including the accurate mapping of existing and proposed sewer service areas.

Related to these issues, several text changes were made to respond to comments made by the towns of Avon and Marlborough. These changes reflect the fact that rural communities, while generally wishing to preserve their rural character, will still need to accommodate growth in selected locations. The changes include:

- Revising the statement of purpose in the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Chapter to address several concerns raised by rural communities. While the plan advocates for and supports municipal efforts to preserve as much high priority open space as possible, it acknowledges that some of this land is in private ownership, and therefore may be developed in the future. If developed, the plan encourages the use of sustainable development practices such as green building and neighborhood design, low impact development techniques, and green infrastructure on these lands.

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- Making revisions to several policy statements to acknowledge that many rural municipalities have town and village centers with infrastructure adequate to support development and redevelopment at an intensity higher than in other parts of town.
- Encouraging each town that has public water and sewer service now to develop and adopt a service area map for public water and sewer, to support rational planning for future growth.
- Acknowledging that some water and sewer service area expansions may be necessary to address known pollution problems.
- Adding a policy statement that recommends working with the State Department of Public Health and the State Department of Environmental Protection to facilitate more timely issuance of on-site system permits because of the negative impacts that time delays and uncertainty of state approval have on development investments.

The plan narrative and maps, which have been revised in response to these comments, are included in your meeting package and have been posted on http://www.crcog.org/Meetings_minutes/mm_regional_planning.html

We look forward to meeting with the RPC on October 15th to conclude our work on the Regional Plan Update. If you have any questions prior to that date, please feel free to contact me at 860-522-2217 ext. 222 or mkowalewski@crcog.org.